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SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA AND USOAS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: PREVAL'S MEETING WITH CDA CARNEY,
NOVEMBER 29

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Timothy M. Carney for Reasons: 1.4 (b and d)

11. (SBU) Summary: Former President Rene Preval expressed satisfaction with the January 8 election date in a meeting with Charge d'Affaires Carney on November 29. He expressed confidence that he was the leading candidate, attributing his popularity to his previous term and his attempts to improve Haiti's infrastructure. Preval evinced less than thorough knowledge of his party's slate of senate and parliamentary candidates, and demonstrated no enthusiasm over its chances to gain a parliamentary majority. Policy goals include dedicating "at least 20 percent of the budget" towards education, and formalizing the informal economy, which he estimates at \$2 billion. The Charge and post's senior officers have maintained a regular dialogue with Preval over the past two months, and in light of his front-running status, we will maintain this contact and seek to expand the scope of our dialogue. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Charge Carney called on former president and L'Espoir (Hope) presidential candidate Rene Preval on November 29, at his campaign headquarters to discuss the campaign. Preval included his former Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis and former Foreign Minister Fritz Longchamp and several other L'Espoir party members. Preval told the Charge he has demurred from participating in the Embassy-sponsored debates between the leading candidates because he has not sorted out differences with the party's platform drafted by others within L'Espoir, though he suggested that he may be interested in participating in the second round of debates. (Note: Media coverage of the final debate between Evans Paul and Leslie Manigat on December 1 focused on Manigat's public admonishment of Preval for not appearing. End Note).

13. (SBU) Preval felt comfortable with the announcement that the first round of elections will take place January 8, 2006. He favored "good elections, but quickly because the people want them." Preval suggested that some interests do not want elections, including those who suggest elections should be delayed at least two years. He also indicated that the Interim Government of Haiti's (IGOH) failure to meet the constitutionally-mandated transition date of February 7 would create problems only if elections ran poorly: "If elections are good, no one will care about February 7." Preval believes that interim prime minister Latortue will not step down as promised on February 7, arguing that Latortue will need to stay on until a new prime minister is sworn into office. He noted that the issue whether the next president's term is five years from the date of inauguration or February 7 needed to be discussed prior to the inauguration.

14. (C) Preval said his party is "calm" and encouraging the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) to do its job without layering on criticism. He admitted the CEP was "not ready" and cited the bungled announcement of electoral dates as evidence. Preval raised the issue of voting sites, warning that more are required as many Haitians would find it difficult to get to their assigned voting locations. Preval said people would give up if they went to the wrong voting site. Preval did not know how many candidates his party is running. Advisors at the meeting, including Preval's former prime minister, education minister and foreign minister, informed Preval and the Charge that L'Espoir had 75 or 76 candidates for deputy and 20 senatorial candidates. Preval shook his head no when asked if L'Espoir could win a majority in parliament.

15. (SBU) Preval said that his apparent status as front-runner in the campaign is due to his tenure as president of Haiti 1995-2000. Preval recited having begun several infrastructural projects, but blamed their incompletion on lack of materiel. Preval said that education would be his priority during a second administration and would dedicate "at least 20 percent of the budget." He added, "if we can get it up to 40%, we'll do it." Preval wants to fulfill his first administration's promise of providing universal primary and secondary education. He lamented that parents cannot afford to send their children to school and said he would encourage small to medium-sized enterprises to create jobs to help parents defray education

costs. Preval noted the one place children could receive a meal was at school. Preval said he is an ardent believer in the teachings of Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto. Preval estimates that the informal economy in Haiti generates over USD two billion and it should be "secularized and formalized." Preval admitted that there has to be simultaneous macroeconomic management to lead to growth in the economy. Preval said he would work to strengthen institutions (nfi) and achieve decentralization of the government called for by the Haitian constitution.

16. (C) On security, Preval said there is no need for a Haitian army since Haiti is "neither defending itself from war nor making war." Preval said he is inclined to maintain the presence of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since they are "here to help." Preval advocates the creation of a type of gendarmerie.

17. (C) Comment: As he has done so in several prior meetings, Preval appeared fit and in good health, not betraying any signs of the chronic alcoholism from which he is rumored to suffer. His excuse for not participating in our debates is no more than that. Preval has yet to appear in public or pronounce on any issue, and as the acknowledged front runner (confirmed by our most recent CID-Gallup poll) there is no reason to expect him to change his strategy. Preval has always made himself available to us privately, and the conversations have been cordial and wide-ranging, if somewhat guarded. Preval has demonstrated a desire to maintain a dialogue with the USG. Post will address the political ramifications of his front-runner status via septel, but for the moment, we will continue our steady dialogue with Preval and his close advisors and seek to expand the areas of our talks to include matters of key bilateral interest. End comment.

CARNEY